

## **The Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan for the Lafayette Metropolitan Area**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The newest federal transportation act, Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), has added a new requirement for allocating grant funds. Proposed projects funded by Section 5310 (Special Needs of Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities), Section 5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute) and Section 5317 (New Freedom) must be derived from a locally developed public transit transportation plan. This plan must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and providers, as well as the general public. An area wide solicitation for applications for grants under Sections 5316 and 5317 must be made in cooperation with the Lafayette Metropolitan Planning Organization.

To fulfill this requirement, the Lafayette Metropolitan Planning Organization held a public meeting on October 25, 2006 to solicit the public for evaluations of the local transportation service. The service providers were also invited to attend to provide their input. In addition, the providers were asked to offer an assessment of their current services and procedures for providing service. The information was condensed into this plan. Another solicitation for public comment was held at the Solutions to Poverty meeting for Lafayette on November 29, 2006. Solutions to Poverty is an organization that brings together stakeholders to work on poverty issues in Louisiana. The public comments and assessments from providers were condensed into this plan.

Another meeting will be held in March of 2007 to discuss other issues that were not raised at the October meeting, such as small, achievable ways of increasing coordination between providers. This is detailed in Section 4.3. Meetings will be held at regular intervals, between three and six months, to determine more coordination options and discuss how the actions are progressing. Obtaining feedback from the riders and providers on the efficacy and efficiency of the new actions will also be an important component of the public meetings.

## **1.2 Funding Programs for Human Service Transportation Providers**

The Section 5310 program grants funding for non-profit agencies to purchase buses, vans, radios, wheelchair lifts, computers and other equipment for the provision of transporting elderly citizens and people with disabilities for whom mass transportation services are unavailable or insufficient. It also allows for meal delivery service for homebound individuals, if the service does not conflict with providing public transportation service or reduce service to passengers. Louisiana was recently selected as one of the seven pilot states for allowing operating assistance as an eligible expense during Fiscal Years 2006 – 2009.

The Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program has a work component, which means it must be used for projects that have the purpose of transporting eligible low-income individuals and welfare recipients to and from places of employment or employment related activities. Job Access grants are intended to provide

new transportation service to assist welfare recipients and other low-income individuals in getting to jobs, training, and childcare. Integrated in this program are the costs of promoting the use of transportation by workers with nontraditional work schedules, promoting the use of transportation vouchers, and promoting the use of employer-provided transportation including the transportation benefits. For Reverse Commute grants, the following activities are eligible—operating costs, capital costs and other costs associated with reverse commute by bus, train, carpool, vans or other transportation service.

The Section 5317 New Freedom program encourages services and facility improvements that go beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This new formula grant program allows associated capital and operating costs for these new services or improvements that go beyond the ADA. An example of “New” service is new routes or services that meet ADA requirements. Enhancements such as signage, curb cuts, and technologies to enhance customer access are incorporated in this “New” service definition. Examples of service that goes beyond the ADA includes expanded hours of paratransit service, paratransit service beyond  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile, same day service, door through door and flex route for commuter bus or rail access. Other eligible projects could include accessible taxi, administration of vouchers, administration of volunteer programs, travel training and mobility management.

### **1.3 New Legislation**

SAFETEA-LU requires that projects selected for funding be derived from a coordinated public transit- transportation plan (“coordinated plan”) beginning in FY 2006 for JARC and FY 2007 for Section 5310 and New Freedom. FTA proposes that a coordinated plan includes the following elements: (a) An assessment of available services that identifies current providers (public, private, and nonprofit); (b) An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. This assessment may be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in service; (c) Strategies and/or activities to address the identified gaps and achieve efficiencies in service delivery; and (d) Relative priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies/activities identified. Plans for FY 2007 should include: (a) An assessment of available services; (b) an assessment of needs; and (c) strategies to address gaps for target populations. Plans must be developed in good faith in coordination with appropriate planning partners and with opportunities for public participation. This good faith effort should be documented. JARC plans found sufficient under FY 2005 requirements are considered sufficient for FY 2006; plans for FY 2007 should be developed in good faith with planning partners and include the elements discussed above. Full implementation of the coordinated planning requirements will take effect for projects funded in FY 2008.

### **1.4 The Resolution**

The Lafayette MPO has developed this plan to fulfill the requirements of SAFETEA-LU, Sections 3012, 3018, and 3019.

## **2.0 Assessment of Transportation Needs**

There are three major groups that are identified in the legislation as being the beneficiaries of the funding programs: individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with limited incomes.

### **2.1 Individuals with Disabilities**

According to the Federal Subcommittee on Highways, Transit and Pipelines, 70 percent of people with disabilities do not work because they do not have a dependable way to get to work.<sup>1</sup> In Lafayette Parish, there are 55,954 non-institutionalized individuals with disabilities over 5 years of age.<sup>2</sup>

### **2.2 Older Adults**

Elderly individuals are also afflicted by barriers to self-guided motorized transport. There are 18,074 adults that are ages 65 and over in Lafayette Parish.<sup>3</sup>

### **2.3 Persons with Limited Income**

The Job Access Reverse Commute Program specifically identifies welfare recipients as a potential target group to service. 1,311 households in Lafayette receive public assistance.<sup>4</sup> In addition, 29,216 individuals were classified as having income that was below the poverty level;<sup>5</sup> 2,639 were aged 65 and over.<sup>6</sup>

## **3.0 Current Providers**

The current providers of transportation in the Lafayette area are the Lafayette Association of Retarded Citizens, the Lafayette Council on Aging, the Lafayette Transit 5316 program, and the SMILE Community Action Agency.

The Lafayette Council on Aging currently has three vans with lifts for its general program, which is funded through 5310 and Older American Act grants. It serves the Lafayette population aged 60 and older, accommodating 330 clients on a monthly basis. The Council on Aging also runs a Daybreak Adult program for Adult Day Health Care clients. This is funded through the 5310 and ADHC Medicaid waivers, and serves 114 clients monthly. Both programs operate only on weekdays.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.house.gov/transportation/highway/06-06-07/06-06-07memo.html>

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) Data Set SF3 PCT067 A-G

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) Data Set SF3 P008035-40 and P008074-79

<sup>4</sup> US Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) Data Set SF3 P064002

<sup>5</sup> US Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) Data Set SF3 P089002

<sup>6</sup> US Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) Data Set SF3 P089009 and P089015

The SMILE Community Action Agency runs a comprehensive program with no eligibility requirements. They have three vans, two with lifts and one with a ramp. The agency receives Medicaid Assistance and 5310 funds. Approximately 314 individuals are served each month, and the program has 1,358 total units of service. The transportation operates only on weekdays.

The Lafayette ARC program is a subscription based service and is funded through 5310 grants. There are nine vans that have both lifts and ramps and operate only on weekdays from 6 am to 5 pm. The program is limited to mentally disabled residents, and 150 clients are served monthly.

The Lafayette Transit system uses 5316 JARC funding to conduct a transit service that runs after the traditional commuting hours on weekdays and Saturdays. This program is contracted to Acadiana Transit, has twelve vans, and serves 200 clients monthly. The Lafayette Transit 5316 JARC program is restricted to transport for employment related activities.

### **3.2 Current Procedures for Receiving Services**

The Council on Aging, Lafayette Transit 5316 JARC, and SMILE programs use demand response scheduling, in which individuals call a different number for each provider to schedule times for drop off and pick up. These services must be scheduled in advance, and one public comment submitted at the public hearing was a grievance that spots fill up quickly for service. In addition to the demand response program, SMILE runs a fixed route service.

The Lafayette ARC program is employment related, conveying mentally disabled individuals to job sites. The vans are driven by instructors at the job sites, which makes the program comparable to a school bus route.

### **3.3 Redundant Service**

There are several cases in which service is being overlapped: low income elderly individuals, 2,639 whom have been identified through the census data, are covered by the Council on Aging, Lafayette Transit, and SMILE; low income disabled individuals are able to utilize services by Lafayette Transit, and SMILE; elderly disabled individuals, the Council on Aging and SMILE; and elderly, low income disabled individuals, by all of the agencies. To this extent, all of the agencies provide redundant service due to these populations that don't fit neatly into one category. At the March 2007 meeting, the MPO would like to address problems that the service providers have with redundant service.

### **3.4 Service Gaps**

At the public hearing, the SMILE representative stated that there were many individuals not currently being serviced in Lafayette due to the current restrictions on the

service areas. A way to rectify this problem would be to grant SMILE 5317 funds and allow the program to go outside of the service area.

Another service gap is the lack of available transportation on weekends. Currently, the only service provider that operates on Saturday is the Lafayette Transit 5316 JARC program. The program is limited to providing service for employment related activities. If more federal funding is given to the Lafayette area, it could be used to expand service on weekends.

#### **4.0 Identification of Coordination Actions**

Due to the small number of service providers and the specialized group that each provider targets, there are two actions that could be undertaken in order to coordinate service. One, all service providers could operate under a centralized dispatcher. The operator would take all calls for service and schedule transportation trips based on availability of the transportation providers and under the regulations of the funding program of the provider. Two, the providers could coordinate their own service based on their current operating system. The second action seems the most workable in the short term, as there are only four providers in the Lafayette system. In the long term, the Lafayette MPO would like to work towards having all providers operate under a centralized dispatch system, with one number for all transportation needs. In the short term, there are several opportunities for improving certain aspects of coordination that will be developed through continued public meetings with the providers and riders. 1

#### **4.1 Actions to Eliminate or Reduce Duplication in Services**

Each transportation provider services a different identified target group: Lafayette Transit 5316 for low-income individuals, Council on Aging for the elderly, ARC for the mentally disabled population, and SMILE for all disabled individuals. As funding becomes more competitive, it could be determined if one particular need supersedes another; if one service provider in the future receives both 5316 and 5317 grants, employment related transportation could be serviced exclusively by that particular provider. Also, it could be determined if one provider will service one group exclusively; all elderly individuals could be serviced by the Council on Aging. If there is a problem with duplication in service, there is a complaint line within the Lafayette Transit office, and it can be used for this purpose by posting a notice in the transit vans.

#### **4.2 Primary Strategy for More Efficient Utilization of Services**

As stated above, the Lafayette MPO would like to strive to have one operator and one number for individuals to contact to receive public transit. Several peer municipalities have found success with similar programs, so this is the preferred option that Lafayette Consolidated Government would like to implement in the coming years. Given that Lafayette Transit is the primary operator of transit services in the area, they will be the lead agency for the program. As more grant programs are created by

Congress, there will likely be more providers that will compete for different programs. As of 2006, all three of the target groups are being serviced by four specialized providers, but the future will possibly bring about a greater diversity of transportation operators. The MPO will continue to coordinate public meetings and solicit input from providers about how to make this process happen, but until then the MPO will work with operators to ensure that maximum efficiency is achieved in even the smallest ways.

To prepare for this transition, a funding document below shows the costs of coordinating the services through Lafayette Consolidated Government. The position is defined as Lafayette Civil Service classification of Dispatcher, Class Code 511.

*Operational Budget:*

<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Retirement/ Medicare</b>	<b>Group Health</b>	<b>Group Life</b>	<b>Total</b>
Dispatcher	\$9.57	\$19,905.60	\$3,473.53	\$6,353.64	\$138.54	\$29,871.31

*Capital Budget:*

No anticipated capital costs.

A dispatcher would have to available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day to accommodate passengers' scheduling issues. The need for this schedule was made apparent by a problem that an attendee had communicating with his transit provider at our stakeholders' public meeting; also, the stakeholders expressed a need for the transit service to operate every day of the week, and the coordinated services will have to cover at least what is being provided now. This amounts to 84 hours a week, which would necessitate the hiring of at least two dispatchers. Service on Sunday could be limited four hours to ensure that no overtime pay would be accrued, but that comes to \$ 59,742.62 in personnel costs alone.

*Action Plan*

<b>Action</b>	<b>Time Period</b>
Continuing Meetings to Implement Smaller Actions to Increase Efficiency	Mar-07, Sept-07
Identify Funding for Coordination Services	Ongoing
Apply for Funding for Coordination Services	Ongoing
Receive Funding for Coordination Services	Ongoing
Hire Employees for Coordination Services	TBA
Implement Coordination Services	TBA

Lafayette Transit has no budget for coordinating this service and will need the State of Louisiana to cover the costs; therefore, at this time, the MPO cannot see implementing

this program. However, the MPO will hold meetings every six months to determine future funding options and build consensus for a completely coordinated system.

### **4.3 Secondary Strategies to Improve Coordination of Services**

Several possibilities exist for making small, achievable steps toward coordination. A central payment system would ease transaction procedures for the riders. Centralized maintenance of the fleets could be a major resource for the providers. A major area with potential is vehicle sharing; for instance, the Lafayette ARC's vans do not run for a large period of time during the time. The Lafayette Transit System will investigate if the ARC would be amenable to having other providers utilize the vans during that time. Sharing staff, coordinating marketing efforts and driver shortages will be addressed at the March 2007 meeting.

### **4.4 Performance Measures**

There are three main performance measures that will be used to gauge the success of the coordination services:

1. Increase in ridership
2. Increase in satisfaction with the coordinated service by the riders
3. Increase in satisfaction with the coordinated service by the providers

The MPO will use the ongoing meetings with the providers and ongoing meetings with the riders to ascertain these sentiments. Pick up and drop offs, as well as the number of calls made to the dispatcher, will be monitored to get the hard numbers on the service.

### **4.5 Conclusion**

The Lafayette Transit system needs to prepare for eventuality in which the transportation providers will have to go to a centralized dispatch system, as that is the end goal of the plan. The providers will have to prepare to share service and clientele. Building consensus for this project will take time and will require more funding from federal sources, so this total coordination would be inefficient to implement immediately. With this document, the Lafayette Transit system and Lafayette Consolidated Government is prepared to move towards this direction; through continued meetings with the providers, efficiency and coordination can be created via smaller, more immediately achievable measures.

## **5.0 Appendices**

### **5.1 Inventory Survey**

#### **Lafayette MPO Transportation Services Inventory**

The purpose of this worksheet is to provide information on the transportation services provided by program, kind of vehicle including accessibility, ride schedules, and funding sources. If you cannot attend the planning meeting, please complete this worksheet and return it to the MPO. If you are attending the meeting, bring a completed copy so a master list of this information can be compiled. Each transportation provider needs to complete this worksheet. Thanks!

Program Name / Sponsoring Agency Program Eligibility	Type of Vehicles (Bus, Vans, Volunteers) (Show # of Vehicles)	Scheduling (Check all that apply)	Days and Hours of Operation	Lift or Ramp Equipped (# of Vehicles)	How To Access	Funding Sources	Number of Clients Served Monthly
Name: Address: Phone: Contact Person: Eligibility Restrictions:		Fixed Route <input type="checkbox"/>  Demand Response <input type="checkbox"/>  Other <input type="checkbox"/> (Explain)	Weekdays  Saturday  Sunday  Holidays	Lifts  Ramps  None	Fixed Routes <input type="checkbox"/>  Call for each Ride <input type="checkbox"/>  Subscription <input type="checkbox"/>  Other <input type="checkbox"/>	85.21 <input type="checkbox"/> 85.20 <input type="checkbox"/> 5307 <input type="checkbox"/> 5311 <input type="checkbox"/> 5310 <input type="checkbox"/> Older Am.Act <input type="checkbox"/> VA <input type="checkbox"/> Med.Assis. <input type="checkbox"/> JARC/WETAP <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	

**5.2. List of Invitees to First Planning Meeting**

Sarah Berthelot - United Way of Acadiana/STOP

Walter Guillory - Lafayette Housing Authority, Executive Director

Andrea McFaul – Acadiana Regional Coalition on Homelessness & Housing

City-Parish President's Awareness Committee for Citizens with Disabilities

Verna Young - SMILE Community Action Agency, Transportation Coordinator

Larry Baker - Council On Aging, HR Director

Glenn Weber – LARC, Executive Director

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Notice of Public  
Meeting

A public meeting will be held on 10/25/2006 from 4 to 6 P.M. at the Rose Parks Transportation Center, 103 E. Cypress St., Lafayette LA to comment on Federal projects for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and employment-related transportation programs. The meeting will include the completion of a Lafayette MPO assessment on public transit human services transportation coordination from all transportation providers and stakeholders in attendance.

Those persons unable to attend the meeting and would like to submit comments in advance may send them to: Ashley Clay Moran, P. O. Box 4017-C Lafayette LA 70503, 337-291-8008, aclay@lafayettegov.net by 10/25/2006.

### **5.3. List of Participants at First Planning Meeting**

Verna Young  
Harold Arceneaux  
Cindy Leleux  
Mike Mitchell

### **5.4. List of Invitees to SToP Meeting**

Phyllis A. Malveaux – LCG Workforce Development  
Glenn Dugas – Workforce Investment Board Executive Director  
Jeannie Bailey – Louisiana Department of Labor  
Dale Cleveland – Louisiana Department of Labor  
Sandra Moore – LCG Human Services Manager  
Ken Villamarette – Lafayette Parish School System, Adult Education  
Adrienne Young – Lafayette Economic Development Authority, Director of Workforce Development  
Janice Clements  
Tina Johnstone – Lafayette Workforce Investment Act Coordinator  
Richard Buie  
Rickey Hardy – Lafayette Parish School Board, District 3 Representative  
Kim James – Catholic Services, Director  
Moriba Karamoko – Lafayette Asset Building Coalition  
JoAnn LeJune – JustFaith Coordinator  
Diane M. Puderer – IRS  
Willie A. Jones – IRS  
Richard Lucito – Department of Social Services  
Louisa Reddell – Department of Social Services  
Mike Mitchell, Lafayette Transit